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ABSTRACT

The Tennessee State University and Community College System is focusing special attention on a particular population of nontraditional students--academically underprepared adults. In 1985, the State Board of Regents implemented the Academic Assessment and Placement Program (AAPP) at the system's universities and two-year colleges. The entry-level holistic assessment and placement program was developed to ensure all students seeking admission to these institutions a reasonable chance of success in college. The Regents established the Remedial/Developmental Studies Program to provide a second chance for recent high school graduates and returning adults to acquire basic academic competencies that are needed for college-level work. The program is based on the mastery learning concept. For the two completed years of the program, it has been successful in increasing retention rates for both traditional and adult students. The State Board of Regents also attempted to reach out to the underprepared adult population by providing expanding opportunities for adults to complete General Educational Development (GED) preparation and testing through the College System. This program expansion is expected to increase the number of Tennesseans eligible for collegiate enrollment as well as employment opportunities. It is expected that the number of persons served will significantly increase in the future as more adults now in literacy and basic skills programs continue their education through the GED. Such programs are needed if colleges are to maintain their enrollments as the population ages. (KC)

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ACCESS FOR ADULTS: THE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM'S INITIATIVES FOR SERVING ACADEMICALLY UNDERPREPARED ADULTS

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference

October 23, 1987

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ACCESS FOR ADULTS: THE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM'S INITIATIVES FOR SERVING ACADEMICALLY UNDERPREPARED ADULTS

The Tennessee State University and Community College System includes six universities, ten community colleges, four technical institutes. The governing board for these twenty collegiate institutions, the Tennessee State Board of Regents, also oversees the operation of twenty-six area vocational-technical schools.

Introduction

Part I: A "Second Chance" For Success in College -- ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT AND THE REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM

Part II: Access to Higher Education for Underprepared Adults -- GED PREPARATION AND TESTING SERVICES

Figures:

1. SBR Fall, 1986 Enrollment: Age Parameter Headcount
2. Remedial/Developmental Enrollment of Fall, 1986 First-Time Freshmen in Mathematics, Reading, Writing, and Study Skills
3. Remedial/Developmental and Non-Remedial/Developmental Enrollments of Fall, 1986 First-Time Freshmen 21 Years of Age or Older
4. Summary Chart of GED Services within the System:
   a. Collegiate Enrollments of Adults Entering with the GED
   b. Number and Location of Test Centers at Collegiate Institutions and Area Technical Vocational Schools (showing increase in number from 1986 to Operational Date of January, 1988)
   c. Collegiate Institutions Offering GED Preparation
   d. Educational Attainment of Adult Population by SBR Service Areas

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Introduction

Access to higher education for the adult student will be one of the most significant issues to be faced by the nation's colleges and universities in the decade to come. This issue is made doubly critical because many students of nontraditional age seek entry into institutions of higher education without the academic skill needed to succeed. The Tennessee State University and Community College System of Tennessee has begun in earnest to address the educational needs of the adult. This System, governed by a Board of Regents, is a large and heterogeneous system enrolling over 100,000 students. The system includes a comprehensive university, Memphis State; four regional universities; an urban land-grant institution, Tennessee State University; ten community colleges; and four technical institutes. In addition, the Board of Regents is the governing body for 26 area technical-vocational schools.

Therefore, this system with its representative types of large and small, urban and rural, research and technical institutions may be said to serve as an index for programming for the adult student nationwide. And because the Tennessee Regents system is so heterogeneous, some conclusions about the types of services that higher education should provide adults may be drawn from its example.

In this paper, I will focus on the Tennessee System's specialized programming for a particular population of nontraditional students--academically underprepared adults. First, let me indicate several striking facts about enrollment of adults in this system.

1. We all know that demographic projections show an aging population, with expectations that, by 1992, students over 25 will constitute half of collegiate enrollments. Enrollment data for the Tennessee system confirm these projections. In Fall 1986, students 25 and older represented 60% of the total enrollment at collegiate technical institutions, 50% at the community colleges, and 35% at the universities (Figure 1).

2. With what levels of academic preparation do these adults enter higher education? Fall, 1986 enrollment of <u>first-time freshmen</u> indicated these percentages (Figure 3):

   a. Students over 21 represented 34% of first-time freshmen enrolled at the fourteen two-year institutions. Of these adults, 64% required placement in remedial/developmental courses.

b. Students over 21 represented 9% of first-time freshmen enrolled at the six universities. Of these adults, 59% required placement in remedial/developmental studies.

3. Furthermore, to indicate the degree to which a high percentage of adults require additional academic preparation, I show you the enrollment by discipline in remedial/developmental studies of Fall 1986 freshmen of all ages (Figure 2).

Therefore, my first point regarding the need for specialized programming to meet the needs of adults entering degree programs is this: Students of the nontraditional age will continue to constitute a major recruitment pool. And, if these students are to remain in college once enrolled, special provisions must be designed to assure them a reasonable chance for success. To provide this "second chance," the Regents' system has implemented a massive remedial program for conditionally admitted students.

My second point regarding specialized programming addresses an additional population of adults: those adults without a high school diploma who seek access to higher education. Adults twenty-five or older without a high school diploma constitute an astounding 44% of the state's population. In some areas of the state, the percentage reaches well over half. The needs of these Tennesseans must be met. The Regents' system has, therefore, launched an initative to reach these students--a constituency not often served by higher education--through expanding GED preparation and testing opportunities.

This paper, then, will briefly outline two Regents' System initiatives to serve the underprepared adult:

1. Mandatory collegiate entry assessment and placement with provisions for remedial education; and

2. Increased GED certification opportunities for adults seeking access to higher education or improved employment.

While these two categories of adults differ in levels of formal eduation attained, they significantly exhibit the same characteristics: they lack the academic skills necessary for success in the workplace or in college, and they deserve an opportunity to prepare themselves for the goals they seek.

I

The Remedial/Developmental Studies Program and the Adult Student

In 1985 the State Board of Regents implemented the Academic Assessment and Placement Program (AAPP) at the system's universities and two-year colleges. The entry-level holistic assessment and placement program was developed to assure all students seeking admission to SBR institutions a reasonable chance of

success in college. Finding that only 25% of degree students who entered the system's universities actually completed a degree within five years of enrollment, the State Board of Regents concluded that, though this low persistence to graduation could be attributed to many factors, a principal reason for student failure was underpreparation in writing, mathematics, and reading. Therefore, in Fall 1985 SBR established the Remedial/Developmental Studies Program to provide a "second chance" for recent high school graduates and returning adults to acquire basic academic competencies that are needed for college-level work.

Stressing improved educational quality as well as equality of student access to higher education, the AAPP program defines minimum preparation as demonstrated competency in the basic academic skills declared in College Board's Educational EQuality Project's Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do. Keyed to these competencies, the AAPP tests in writing, reading comprehension, logical relationships, and mathematics (through intermediate algebra) measure a student's level of preparation. First-time freshmen under twenty-one years of age who present an ACT composite score of less that 16 are required to undergo AAPP testing. All entering students twenty-one or older are required to complete the AAPP battery. The age classification of twenty-one (rather than twenty-five) or older has constituted a specialized definition of adult student for the purposes of AAPP assessment and placement.

Those students of all ages whose AAPP test scores indicate the need for additional preparation are placed in appropriate remedial or developmental courses. And, a startling number of students require additional preparation, as the graphs I showed your earlier indicate. For the two completed years of Program operation, the percentage of adults requiring additional study has exceeded that for the traditional student. This differential caused some early concern. In the first year of program operation, many institutions feared decreasing enrollments, particularly by adults, because it was thought that fewer students would commit to additional terms of preparation. However, in anticipating this possible reaction, those institutions enrolling a significant number of adults as first-time freshmen intensively marketed the program as an opportunity, not as a penalty, targeting adults in this campaign. Those institutions have realized the benefits of such recruitment tactics. In fact, fears that mandatory screening and placement might adversely affect enrollments just have not been borne out. Instititions are now quick to credit the retention value of the Remedial/Developmental Studies Program in noting enrollment increases for second-year students.

Much of the success of the Remedial/Developmental Program can be attributed to its being based on the mastery learning concept. In preparing the underprepared adult, institutions place students in small classes where they receive individualized instruction by highly specialized faculty. Adult students who are placed in remedial/developmental courses derive the added benefit of academic monitoring by a counseling staff. The competency-based program stresses the acquisition and application of learning skills across subject areas, and students exit the final developmental courses in reading,

English and mathematics, only after demonstrating readiness for college-level work. The credit that is received for these courses is over and above the total required for graduation.

In underscoring the emphasis on quality of programs and equality of access, SBR institutions have reviewed all freshman-level college courses to assure that these courses build upon the academic competencies considered to be entry requirements. This review ensures that courses in which freshmen may enroll are indeed college level and that students are required to use previously acquired knowledge and academic confidence demonstrated at entry or gained in developmental study as they progress through degree programs.

To assess the effectiveness of the Remedial/Developmental Studies Program, an elaborate evaluation model has been developed that tracks student performance in preparation courses through degree programs to graduation. Data from the first two years of program operation are currently being analyzed, and the program evaluation should be completed by Spring 1988.

Particular attention is being given to retention indications for adults who have completed remedial/developmental courses and who have subsequently completed college-level courses. Retention data gathered from institutions indicate that some differences in enrollment patterns exist between the under 21 and 21 and older age groups. The Developmental Studies Program data at Austin Peay State University, an institution that places over 50% of all first-time freshmen in at least one remedial/developmental course, show that retention differences between the age categories are closing however. During the first year of program operation, 1985-86, the drop-out rate for adults (21 and older) was higher than for the traditional age student. The retention rate of adults from Fall, 1985 to Winter, 1986 was 65% whereas the retention of the under 21 category was at 85%. In looking at the retention of adults entering Fall 1985 through Spring 1987, however, it can be noted that these differences had disappeared with adults being retained at 42% and traditional age students at 43%.

This data resembles that from two-year colleges, with the exception that initial enrollments of both age groups in developmental studies are generally higher at community colleges and technical institutes than at universities. In responding to the Austin Peay findings and similar indications from other campuses that even greater measures are needed to improve adult retention, institutions have begun to extend specialized counseling and advisement services and other interventions assisting adults within the first term of enrollment. On a system-wide basis, specific development and training activities and workshops have been conducted for faculty and support personnel associated with Developmental Studies. These activities have focused on improved advisement, academic monitoring of adults, and assessing the factors in the campus climate that encourage continued enrollment by the non-traditional student.

. . . . . .

The success of the Developmental Program is contributing to system-wide interest in launching a second emphasis on adult education--increasing the pool

of adults eligible for collegiate enrollment. This planning goal is being approached not through a mandated academic program with special appropriations as was Developmental Studies but through the provision of non-credit, continuing education. This second area of emphasis lies with extending preparation leading to high school equivalency and increasing the number of GED testing centers on SBR campuses.

II

SBR Planning Assumptions Regarding Adult Education

Recent national attention to improved adult literacy has highlighted a particular population of potential college students: those students who enter higher education through nontraditional channels at nontraditional ages, but usually with the most traditional of goals -- to improve employment possibilities. Specifically, many of these nontraditional students improve their employment and further educational opportunities through GED certification. According to the American Council on Education's Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials, 55 percent of 1986 GED completers indicated that they intended to continue their education. In Tennessee, the 16,027 GED examinees in 1986 represented only a small percentage of potential participants in GED programs. As I previously noted, census data for 1980 show that Tennesseans without a high school diploma constituted 44% of the state's adult population.

That a serious need exists in Tennessee for educational opportunity for adults cannot be disputed. That adults seeking GED certification should be served through a system of higher education is a position affirmed by changing demographics and advancing employment requirements. While the adult without a high school diploma represents a population not traditionally served by SBR collegiate institutions, the needs of this constituency clearly redefine the scope of "adult education." Access to Quality Undergraduate Education in the Two-Year College, a Southern Regional Education Board 1987 publication, underscores the call for a diversity of programs at the two-year institution, particularly in meeting the educational needs of additional populations through delivery of adult basic and high school education.

Current SBR initiatives attempt to answer these needs. It is clear that expanding opportunities for adults to complete GED preparation and testing through SBR colleges, universities, and area vocational-technical schools will improve employment possibilities for a sizable portion of the state's population. And it is also clear that expanding GED preparation and testing services at SBR institutions will increase the number of adults eligible for college enrollment.

But how should a system of higher education deliver instruction to a population without the high school diploma, a constituency not traditionally served? And how can basic skills and high school equivalency instruction be delivered without special appropriations or funding allowances? First, it must

be explained that Adult Basic Education/GED funding in Tennessee is not administered through a two-year college board as it is in North Carolina and Iowa, for example. Operating on a fee-recovery basis in offering non-credit GED preparation, SBR institutions will not receive federal support for adult education. Administration of Adult Basic Education will continue to be the province of the Tennessee State Department of Education (grades K-12), and, through the SDE, public school systems will continue to receive federal funds for adult education.

Why, then, have SBR institutions elected to extend the boundaries of "adult education" without specific funding, and why has this commitment come at this time? Part of the answer lies with the climate in Tennessee regarding literacy programs. The State Department of Education has recently launched a major literacy campaign which will involve the cooperation of various state agencies and civic organizations. The intent of the State Department is to channel major funding to literacy and basic education (0-8 grades), placing less emphasis on support for GED instruction. Therefore, the role of the Regents' System in the coalition for adult education is to complement the SDE emphasis on literacy and basic skills training by stepping up GED instruction and testing at an increased number of system institutions. Consequently, GED instruction and testing for SBR institutions will be, first, an educational initiative, a service within the missions of the community colleges, the two-year technical institutes, and the area technical-vocational schools. For the collegiate institutions, a second reason for extending these services is clearly at work: to increase the number of Tennesseans eligible for enrollment.

GED preparation and certification currently provide access to higher education for a significant number of the state's citizens. Fall 1986 SBR enrollment data show that 12% of first-time freshmen at technical institutes, 9% of freshmen at community colleges, and 3% at universities were admitted on the basis of high school diploma equivalency. SBR institutions offering GED preparation courses and administering testing find that these services delivered on campus facilitate subsequent college enrollment by GED completers. At Dyersburg State Community College in rural West Tennessee, for example, GED certificate holders comprised 20% of the Fall 1986 Fall cohort (Figure 4).

Recognizing the enrollment implications, not just Tennessee colleges but those nationwide have begun to target GED graduates as a specific population to be recruited. The 1986 GED Statistical Report characterizes this clientele nationally:

> The average age of 1986 examinees was 26.5 years. Nearly one third of the examinees, however, were 19 or younger, 43% were 20-29 years of age; 18% were 30-391 while about 11% were 40 or older.

The Report indicates that, in Tennessee,

the average age of the 16,027 examinees was 28; twenty-seven percent were 19 or younger; thirty-eight percent were 20-29; twenty percent were 30-39; and 15% were 40 or older.

Aside from the many Tennesseans twenty-five and older without a high school diploma, a second population benefits from GED opportunities: A Tennessee Department of Employment Security High School Graduate Survey finds that, while the 1986 total of state high school graduates was 49,905, the number of school dropouts reached 8,968, or about 18%. Since the 1986 GED Statistical Report notes that over a fourth of GED examinees were nineteen or younger, it may be inferred that high school equivalency preparation and testing is an immediate educational option for students leaving high school before graduation as well as an opportunity for adults. How, then, the Regents' system responding to these realities? The system is responding by:

1. Almost doubling the number of GED test centers administered by collegiate institutions and area schools;

2. Expanding scheduling of GED preparation courses to increase the number of Tennesseans eligible for collegiate enrollment as well as employment opportunities.

In 1986, 13 of the state's 24 GED test centers were located on SBR campuses. As of January, 1988, that number will have increased to 23 centers administered by SBR collegiate institutions and area vocational-technical schools, or two-thirds of the test centers in the state. In seeking authorization for the additional test services, SBR has worked with the State Department of Education's Director of Test Administration in assessing the need for the sites relative to the educational attainment of the area population and the volume of testing done by existing area test centers. In an area where the addition of a center is not warranted because of existing services, cooperation between testing agencies and SBR institutions has been fostered. For example, the Memphis City Schools will administer the test on the State Tech Memphis campus according to a schedule established by the technical institute. Such measures will accomodate persons preparing for certification through State Tech courses.

Ten of the twenty collegiate institutions (one university and nine two-year colleges) offered GED preparation courses during the 1986-87 academic year. Beginning fall 1988, the number of institutions offering the non-credit course will increase substantially, for the two-year colleges newly authorized as test sites plan to develop preparation courses. Additionally, all twenty-six area schools implemented a basic skills curriculum in 1985 which is supplemented by GED materials. Prior to the implementation of this curriculum there had been no formalized provisions for GED preparation. By fall 1988, then, the SBR institutions will offer Tennessee citizens almost forty locations where they may prepare for the high school equivalency diploma. But factors other than facilitation of testing contribute to the increase in the number of persons preparing for certification.

— One factor is the support for basic skills development through GED instruction that JTPA affords eligible students not otherwise enrolled at area schools or community colleges. As one of seven System JTPA lead administrative entities, Columbia State Community College has established labs that use the Principle of the Alphabet Literacy System in the eight counties of the college's service area, and Dyersburg State has similarly established PALS centers in five counties. This IBM interactive computer-laser videodisc technology constitutes an innovative method for teaching literacy skills to adults. Columbia State plans to serve 1200 people in 1987-88, the first year of operation, and Dyersburg likewise expects to reach a significant number of adults. Walters State Community College has developed a Comprehensive Competencies Program Learning Center in each of the ten counties comprising that college's service area as well as a center on the campus. These centers provide instruction through GED training.

— Another institutional initiative is the comprehensive program launched by Chattanooga State Technical Community College. As of July, 1987, this college assumed the responsibility for both ABE/GED instruction and GED testing for the City of Chattanooga and Hamilton County. In this new role Chattanooga state works in a cooperative manner with all literacy agencies in the community. In its first term of operation, approximately 450 students enrolled in ABE/GED classes on the main campus and at several extensions. Those students preparing for the GED will use the college's PLATO lab and will receive individualized instruction. Students aided by JTPA who complete the GED will be encouraged to enter various job training or educational program at Chattanooga State. The goal for the ABE/GED program is to enroll at least 1,000 persons from fall, 1987 to fall, 1988. The first-year goal for the GED testing center is to test 2,000.

— A possibility exists for the shared use of labs equiped with self-paced audio-visual-tutorial (AVT) equipment and instructional material that is otherwise designated for remedial/developmental education. Evening and even weekend scheduling of GED classes in these labs on an availability basis is receiving consideration.

Using testing activity and number of preparation classes offered in 1986 as a base for projecting an increase in the number of adults to be served in the fifth year of operation for newly authorized centers, the following general statements may be made:

1. If the average number of persons tested in 1986 at an SBR administered center (13 centers) was 582 (7573 total) and if the 23 SBR centers test at this average in 1992, 13,386 adults will be served—an almost 100% increase in the fifth testing year.

2. An informal 1986 survey of the ten SBR institutions offering GED instruction indicated that about 1,200 persons were enrolled in non-credit GED preparation courses. It is possible that this number

can be doubled for 1989, for additional collegiate institutions will be offering classes, the projected enrollment for each of the two institutions with large programs is from 400-700, and the area vocational schools are emphasizing certification opportunities for students without the high school diploma.

3. Furthermore, it is expected that the number of persons served will significantly increase as more adults now in literacy and basic skills programs continue their education through the GED.

The admonition to colleges and universities that they must respond to changing demographics and changing employment patterns is clearly heard from many sectors. A recent issue of the American Council on Education's Higher Education and National Affairs cites Bureau of Labor Statistics projections as indicating that jobs in occupations requiring the most education will increase greatly in number, and, furthermore, projections show dramatic increases in the proportion of jobs requiring workers to have at least one year of college. Clearly, persons without high school diplomas will have progressively more difficulty finding jobs and upgrading skills to keep jobs.

Thus, to address educational needs of adults, particularly underprepared adults, State Board of Regents' institutions have developed the special access programming that I have described. State support for the special access programming has been monetary in the case of Remedial/Developmental educational opportunities for adults entering Regents' colleges and universities. This program receives enhancement funding. Support for the SBR commitment to increased educational and employment opportunities for adults seeking the GED is evident in the growing effectiveness of literacy coalitions with other state educational agencies and civic organizations.

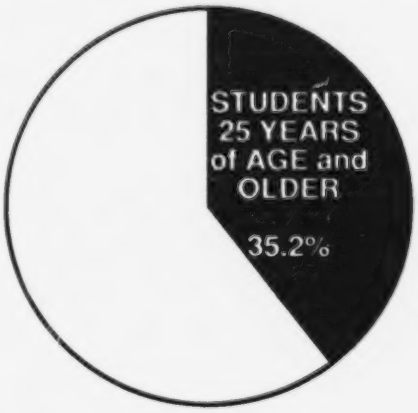
What conclusions can be drawn from one system of higher education's efforts to meet the needs of adult students, the students rapidly gaining the majority at the two-year institution and the universities as well? The major conclusion is that programming must be designed to address the particular educational needs of this population if adult are to indeed be served. And, to address the obvious correlative, specialized programming must be designed if colleges and universities are to look successfully to this recruitment pool to maintain enrollments and institutional viability.

FIGURE 1

SYSTEM ENROLLMENT: FALL, 1986
AGE PARAMETER HEADCOUNT
Total Enrollment: 109,316

COMMUNITY COLLEGES
31,431

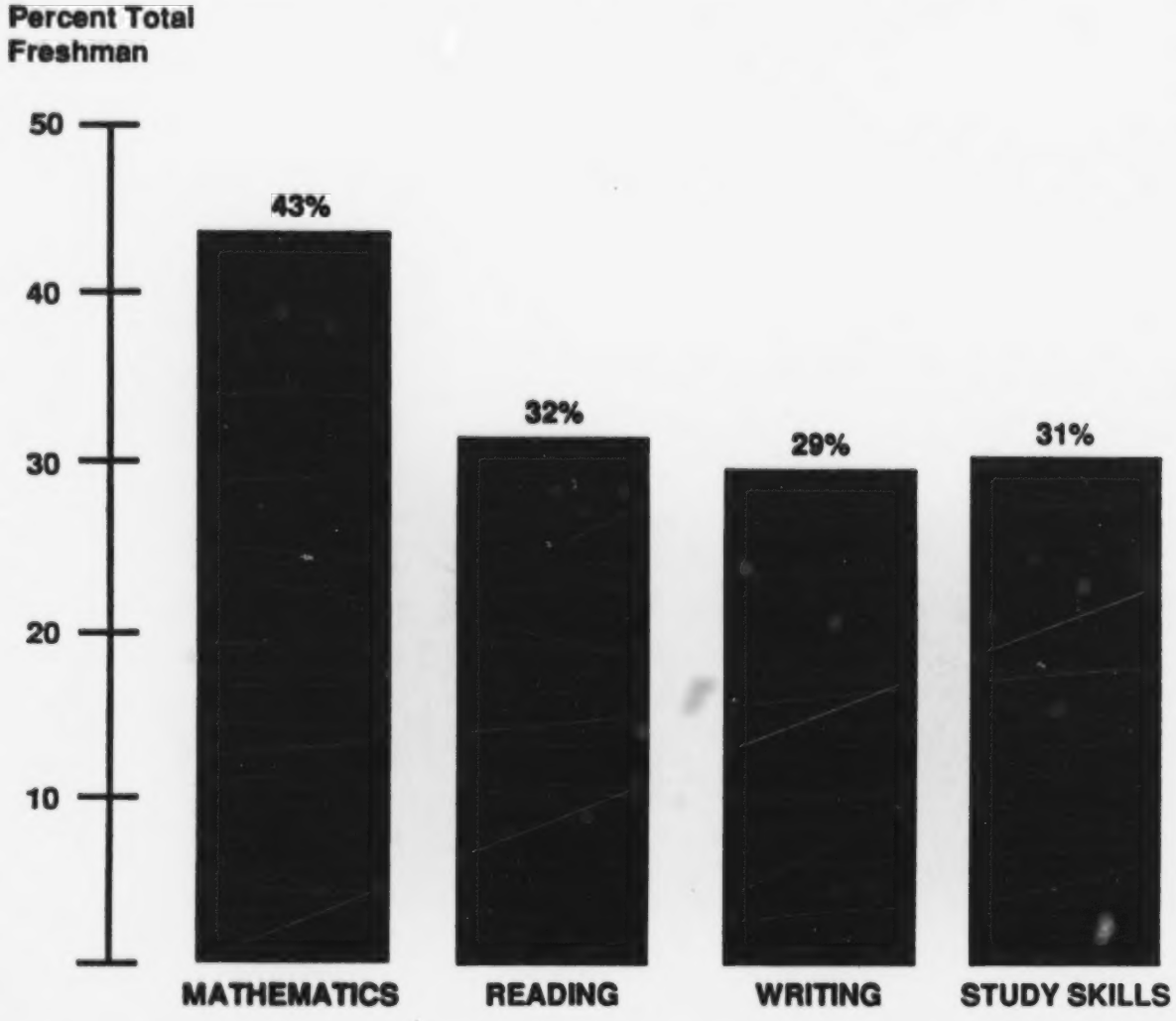
TECHNICAL INSTITUTES
17,409



UNIVERSITIES
60,476

FIGURE 2

REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL ENROLLMENT
FALL, 1986 FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN
ALL AGES

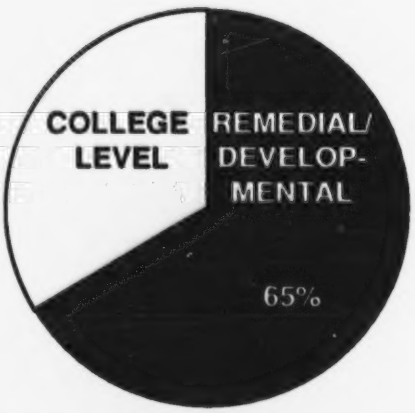


Number of Freshmen Enrolled in Remedial/Developmental: 8,413

FIGURE 3

REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL and NON-REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL ENROLLMENTS of FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN 21 YEARS of AGE or OLDER FALL, 1986

UNIVERSITIES: 9% of FRESHMEN are 21 and OLDER



TWO-YEAR INSTITUTES: 34% of FRESHMEN are 21 and OLDER

SYSTEM: 21% of FRESHMEN are 21 and OLDER

Summary Chart

GED PREPARATION COURSES AND TESTING SERVICES ON SBR CAMPUSES

Collegiate Institutions and Area Schools (with Designated Lead)	GED TEST SITE 1986	NEW SITES OPERATIONAL JANUARY 1987	OFFERING GED PREP	% POPULATION 25 AND OLDER WITHOUT H.S. DIPLOMA	FALL, 1986 FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN ALL AGES WITH GED
Universities:					
Austin Peay	X				4%
East Tennessee	X				4%
Memphis State			X		2%
Middle Tennessee	X				2%
Tennessee State	X				4%
Tennessee Tech	X				0.1%
Community Colleges as Lead Institutions for Area Technical-Vocational Schools:					
Chattanooga State		X	X	40.9	9%
Cleveland State	X		X	52.6	11%
Columbia State	X		X	47.5	5%
Pulaski AVTS		X	X		
Dyersburg State	X		X	51.2	20%
Covington AVTS		X	X		
Ripley AVTS		X	X		
Jackson State	X		X	53.2	5%
Paris AVTS		X	X		
Savannah AVTS		X	X		
Motlow State	X		X	47.4	8%
McMinnville AVTS		X	X		
Roane State	X		X	48.9	8%
Crossville ATS		X	X		
Shelby State					10%
Volunteer State	X		X	48.1	8%
Walters State	X		X	54.4	9%
			Total Community Colleges		9%
Technical Institutes:					
Nashville State Tech				36.3	11%
Dickson AVTS		X	X		
State Tech Knoxville				35.6	14%
State Tech Memphis				34.9	11%
Tri-Cities Tech		X	X	46.1	14%
			Total Technical Institutes		12.4%
SYSTEM TOTAL:	23 Test Centers		11 Collegiate and 26 AVTS Offering GED Instruction		